

Corruption, Pedophilia, and Accountability in Mexico: The Case of Lydia Cacho Ribeiro

A Senior Honors Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation  
*With Research Distinction* in International Studies  
at The Ohio State University

By

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May 2008

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I am thankful for the opportunity to hear Lydia Cacho Ribeiro speak at the 2007 Ginetta Sagan Award ceremony held by Amnesty International USA. I was greatly inspired by all of Lydia's hard work, courage and hope for human rights. Amnesty International has taught me so much during my undergraduate career, through both the international organization and the community of activists at the Ohio State University. A truly have learned what it means to be a 'global citizen.'

Secondly, I am deeply indebted to Trek Micacchione for supporting me through my entire research process. Thank you for your time, energy, undivided attention and love.

Moreover, I am extremely grateful to have a thesis defense committee which provided me with invaluable critique and encouragement: Sara Schatz and Ignacio Corona of the Ohio State University Department of Spanish and Portuguese and Anthony Mughan of the Department of International Studies. It was a pleasure to have your expertise and knowledge devoted to my work.

Finally and most importantly, the highest gratitude and admiration goes to my advisor and mentor, Sara Schatz. Thank you for a wonderful class taught in Spring of 2007 that initiated my interests in state crime in Latin American and the encouraging relationship that has since developed. I will gratefully take with me invaluable research and career advice.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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ACRONYM GUIDE .....	4
INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW .....	5
CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	8
<b>I. Accountability as a Developmental Concept of Democracy</b>	
<b>II. Social Accountability</b>	
CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND .....	16
<b>I. Cancún</b>	
<b>II. Children in the Sex Industry</b>	
CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDY- LYDIA CACHO RIBEIRO .....	26
<b>I. The Arrest</b>	
<b>II. <i>Los Demonios del Eden</i></b>	
<b>III. Succar Exposed</b>	
<b>IV. After the Arrest</b>	
<b>V. Media and International Organizations</b>	
<b>VI. Political Response</b>	
<b>VII. Discussion</b>	
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS .....	52
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	54

**ACRONYM GUIDE**

AFI	Agencia Federal de Investigación (Federal Investigations Agency)
CIAM	(Centro Integral de la Atención a la Mujer)
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
DEA	<i>Drug Enforcement Agency</i>
Fobaproa	Fondo Bancario de Protección al Ahorro ( <i>Banking Fund for the Protection of Savings</i> )
PAN	Partido Acción Nacional ( <i>National Action Party</i> )
PGR	Procuraduría General de la República (Attorney General)
PGJE	Procuraduria general de Justicia del Estado
PRD	Partido de la Revolución Democrática ( <i>Party of the Democratic Revolution</i> )
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional ( <i>Institutional Revolutionary Party</i> )
TAG	Tarrant Apparel Group
UNICEF-DIF	United Nations Children's Fund- Desarrollo Intergral de la Familia ( <i>Integral Family Development</i> )

## INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged in the literature on 'illiberal' democracies that there are inherent deficits in institutional guarantees of accountability in many new Latin American democracies. Administrations, if they so chose, can effectively avoid the traditional legislative constraints and judicial oversights posed by mechanisms of control over government actions and decisions. Therefore, attention must be given to political practices and institutional deficits that prevent the consolidation of strong and accountable democratic institutions (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz: 2000). Guillermo O'Donnell (1995) defines two dimensions traditionally used to measure the quality of democracy: vertical electoral accountability and horizontal accountability. Vertical accountability focuses on elections as a form of control that citizens have over their government. Horizontal accountability concerns the effective operation of the system of checks and balances and due process in governmental decision making. Catalina Smulovitz and Enrique Peruzzotti (2000) claim the concept of vertical accountability must not only be limited to elections. They argue that "by focusing on traditional mechanisms of accountability- elections, the separation of powers, and the existence of a system of checks and balances among the various branches of government- [one] ignores the growth of alternative forms of political control that rely on citizen action and civil-society organizations." There is a very important social dimension to accountability that can be especially valuable in Latin American democracies.

In this thesis, I will begin by introducing current definitions of accountability and will expand them to include the important social dimension, often overlooked in the

literature. In chapter two I detail the specifics on the global commercial exploitation of children and its social manifestation in the Mexican city of Cancún, where my case study on child abuse is set. In my thesis, I will refine our understanding of the concept of accountability through an empirical case study of Lydia Cacho Ribeiro, a Mexican human rights/women's rights defender who exposed a child prostitution ring in Cancún, Mexico. Cacho's case is important for the understanding of the obstacles and successes in Mexico's current democracy as it transitions from an electoral democracy to one that incorporates political agency and human capability through the intimate connection of political democracy, human development and human rights (O'Donnell: 2004). In this research I explore the roles of international and domestic human rights organizations in exposing Cacho's case, the resistance of some government officials to social accountability, and the impact this case had on initiating horizontal mechanisms of control. From this case I draw conclusions on how social accountability can be used to strengthen Latin American democracies.

I conclude that social accountability is important in Mexico because civil society has to play a strong role as a social watchdog and investigator because of accountability constraints within the Congress. Authoritarian centers of power maintain a firm hold over state-level judiciaries and international and domestic human rights organizations must play a central role in setting and pushing agendas. Nevertheless, social accountability mechanisms in Mexico are becoming more focused and effective at producing a clearer response in terms of actual congressional legislation and Supreme Court action. Mexico's case exemplifies the much stronger role civil society must play in new democracies. However, highlighting social accountability is not meant

to de-emphasize the importance of horizontal/vertical accountability but, rather to stress how social accountability can promote and strengthen horizontal accountability.

I answer my broader research question by studying the specifics of Lydia Cacho Ribeiro's case and generalizing my findings to other social accountability movements in Latin America. This study can be used as a tool to analyze similar challenges in accountability in electoral democracies throughout Latin America.

## CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

**Accountability as a Developmental Concept of Democracy**

Scott Morgenstern and Luigi Manzetti (2003: 132) note that “the concept of oversight is based upon the notion that while government is necessary for democracy to prosper in an orderly fashion, its institutions and the people who staff them must be accountable for their actions. Doing otherwise invites people in official positions to abuse their discretionary power in order to pursue particular interests rather than the public good.” They note that the system of effective oversight in the United States did not develop just because the Constitution laid out a system of checks and balances, but instead there has been a non-linear progression towards more effective oversight. The authors observe the failure of many Latin American countries to mature oversight institutions despite the adoption of a United States-style presidential system. Morgenstern and Manzetti compare the historical development of oversight institutions in the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century to those recently in Argentina.

Oversight is “the monitoring and control of one person or institution (generally termed the agent) by another (the principal), so that the agent acts in the principal’s interest” (Morgenstern and Manzetti: 2003). They outline an inductive theory based on the United States’ relatively successful system of checks and balances and one particular type of oversight-- legislative oversight of the executive. This requires legislators who are motivated by: 1) A public outcry for reform (which generally implies the existence of a free and independent press) and 2) Political career interest in confronting, rather than supporting the executive.



Legislators advance oversight because they are to some degree independent from party leaders. In pursuit of oversight legislators need means, which are functions of:

- a. A high level of professionalization of the legislature,
- b. A long-lived democracy to continue developing the institutions for vigilance among which an independent judiciary is paramount, and
- c. Sufficient constitutional authority to pursue their interest

Despite the transition to democracy in many Latin American democracies experienced during the third wave of democratization (Huntington: 1992), struggles to uphold oversight institutions continue. Guillermo O'Donnell classifies these newly formed democracies as 'polyarchies:' having flaws in the existing law concerning the administrative regulations that discriminate minorities and women as defendants in criminal cases and in prison conditions as well as discrimination in the application of law. Within polyarchies, the law can be twisted and used in the favor of the powerful or for repression. There is a distinction made in the relationship between bureaucracies and 'ordinary citizens, meaning that if a person does not have the proper social status or connections, she is almost guaranteed to experience difficulties. There also is irregularity between who has access to the judiciary and to fair process which is then further exacerbated by sheer lawlessness (O'Donnell, 1999).

O'Donnell classifies Mexico as a "conditional political democracy." That is, one in which the pertinent characteristics of democracy are "satisfied at the national level, but there are significant discontinuities in terms of the reach of the legality of the state in

several regions, including the nondemocratic characteristics of subnational regimes.” In addition, O’Donnell as of 2004, had reservations about saying that fair elections in Mexico had been truly institutionalized (2004).

Liberal representative democracies can be distinguished from other types of regimes based on “their combination of an institutional framework of authorization of political power with a framework oriented to ensure the responsiveness and accountability of those authorized agents.” The term ‘representative’ suggests the existence of a fundamental gap between political representatives and citizens. This gap requires institutional mechanisms to guarantee that this separation does not result in illegal or unresponsive governments. At the center of the concept of accountability lies the question: How precisely, does one regulate and reduce the gap between representatives and citizens? (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006)

Accountability refers to the ability to ensure that public officials are answerable for their behavior, forced to justify and inform the citizenry about their decisions and possibly eventually be sanctioned for them. Legal accountability is the concept that refers to a set of institutional mechanisms aimed at ensuring the actions of public officials are legally and constitutionally framed. Constitutional norms, legal codes, administrative procedures and fundamental rights create a legal constitutional framework that constrains elected and nonelected political figures’ actions (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006). Political accountability refers to the means to punish unresponsive or irresponsible administrations, usually through elections.

However, some question the efficacy of both political and legal forms of accountability, claiming elections are ineffective because citizens only have one chance

to punish or reward behavior, voting is decentralized and that the average citizen experiences deficits of information that make him unable to adequately evaluate government performance and decisions. Citizens also face difficulties with legal accountability when trying to subject public officials to the rule of law. However, these deficits are not reserved only for Latin American democracies, but are found in problems of accountability in all democratic governments (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006).

Guillermo O'Donnell (2004) does, however, claim that Latin American polyarchies demonstrate "a notorious deficit of legal accountability" to the extent that they are not representative democracies but delegative. In delegative democracies electoral mechanisms of vertical accountability are not complimented by effective instruments of horizontal accountability like intrastate agencies that are legally enabled and empowered to check and sanction unlawful action by state agencies or political actors. Therefore the executive (in Mexico the president as head executive and party leader) is largely free of constitutional and legal restraints despite the fact that there is a 'formal' system of checks and balances. This traditionally has been true in Mexico, but the federal executive branch is becoming more responsible to checks and balances since the 1994 reforms and even more so with the election of Vicente Fox Quesada in 2000.

### **Social Accountability**

Peruzzotti and Smulovitz expand O'Donnell's model of vertical accountability to include the social dimension that had been previously overlooked. Though elections

are the sole mechanism for authorizing political representation, they are not the only vertical tool for holding representatives accountable. The authors claim that elections need to be complemented by an active civil society and autonomous media institutions through the workings of civic associations, NGOs, social movements, and media organizations that can add new resources to traditional discussions of electoral and constitutional mechanisms of government control. Furthermore, the actions of civil society and the media can, on occasion, compensate for some of the built-in deficits of accountability instruments. The authors define social accountability as follows:

Social accountability is a nonelectoral yet vertical mechanism of control of political authorities that rests on the actions of an array of citizens' associations and movements and the media. The actions of these groups monitor public officials, expose governmental wrongdoing, and can activate the operation of horizontal agencies. Social accountability employs both institutional and noninstitutional tools. The activation of legal actions or claims before oversight agencies is an example of an institutionally channeled action, social mobilizations and media exposés are examples of noninstitutional ones.

Social accountability is similar, yet distinctly different from vertical and horizontal accountability. Unlike electoral vertical accountability, social accountability can be activated in between elections and 'on demand.' Similar to horizontal accountability, social accountability can oversee politicians and representative officials while politicians while they make policy decisions. Social accountability also differs in the way that it imposes sanctions, even if these sanctions are most likely symbolic and not official. In

contrast to the other forms of accountability, social accountability can perform watchdog functions without the need of majorities or constitutional entitlements.

Figure 1.1

1.1 Types of Accountability			
Who Controls	Actors	What Is Controlled	
		Politicians	Bureaucrats
HORIZONTAL ACCOUNTABILITY <sup>a</sup>			
Balancing	Executive power	Veto	Policy setting Regulation Administrative oversight Nomination and demotion of personnel
	Legislative power	Impeachment	Policy setting Regulation Administrative oversight Nomination and demotion of personnel
	Judicial power	Judicial review	
Mandated	Oversight agencies	Control of law abidance	Control of law abidance
		Investigative and denouncing faculties	Investigative and denouncing faculties
VERTICAL ACCOUNTABILITY			
Societal	Civic associations, NGOs, and social movements	Social mobilization and public denunciation	Social mobilization and public denunciation
		Denunciation by oversight agencies	Denunciation by oversight agencies
		Agenda setting	Agenda setting
	Media	Investigation and public denunciation	Investigation and public denunciation
Electoral	Individual citizens	Agenda setting	Agenda setting
		Voting	

<sup>a</sup> We are following Guillermo O'Donnell's classification of accountability mechanisms (see "Horizontal Accountability: The Legal Institutionalization of Mistrust," in Scott Mainwaring and Christopher Welna, eds., *Democratic Accountability in Latin America* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003]).

Source: Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006. pg. 27

Therefore, social accountability emphasizes the 'intensity' of their claims and the impact on social opinion while actors in the electoral environment have to maximize 'extension' of their support through convincing members and agencies of representative bodies. The three main ways social accountability is exercised is through judicialization, social mobilization and mediatization (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz: 2006).

Judicialization or legal strategy entails “submission by individuals or social actors of legal claims or legally framed petitions to the courts or other control agencies” (Perzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006: 20). It is an instrument that civil society and individuals can use to force the state to intervene in political and social disputes in which public actors want to avoid. Using legal claims as a way of framing social demands provides a ‘seal’ of legitimacy to the claims and forces the state to take a stance on the advanced claims. Judicialization is especially useful in Latin America because of the steps taken in recent years to increase the number of regular legal claims, the appearance of legal institutions which expand the ways in which citizens may petition their rights, and a greater number of actors authorized to make claims (Perzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006).

A second way that social accountability is exercised is through social mobilization. Control is achieved when organized social actors are able to call attention to a particular problem or public wrongdoing as a tool to demand legal accountability. For social mobilization to be successful, the claim and the problem must be visible, aggregate public opinion and threaten reputation or career costs to public agents.

Lastly, mediatization can be used to exercise social accountability through exposing the wrongdoing, increasing visibility of the claims and imposing reputation costs on public agents who need reputation protection to hold public office. Individual journalists, media associations, civil society or individual citizens can initiate this aspect of social control. In Latin America in recent years there has been an increase in investigative journalism, civil society creating public agendas and autonomy of media organizations leading to the emergence of more aggressive watchdog journalism.

Overall, social accountability has the greatest chance of being effective when

these three strategies are used together because the task of control is distributed amongst different agencies and actors. There is not sequential relationship between the different aspects; therefore any of the three could spark the other two. Working together the three parts have the potential for controlling governmental actions in representative democracies and is one of the many roads that lead to more governmentally accountability. Due to the unique characteristics present in Latin America, social accountability can be an effective tool for holding and reminding public officials that they are accountable.

## CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

**Cancún**

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Cancún and the state of Quintana Roo was nicknamed “the Mexican Siberia.” Porfirio Díaz established the region as a suitable place for undesirables and rebels. Shortly after, the region was viewed as similar to the frontier of the West in the United States. Towns were established by men seeking their fortune from the natural resources of the Yucatan Peninsula.

Modern Cancún has its foundations in the early 1970s. In 1969, the World Bank recommended that the Mexican government create tourist destinations along its coastline, capitalizing on the beautiful natural resources. Cancún was chosen along with Loreto, Iztapa, Bahías de Huatulco, and Los Cabos (Cacho: 2005). As the result of a poll carried out by the Bank of Mexico during the government of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976), Cancún, which up to that time consisting of coconut palms, was deemed “touristically exploitable.” The few inhabitants who lived in the place were to be found in Puerto Juárez, the port for crossing to Isla Mujeres. In 1974 when the first hotels were built in the region, 90% of the inhabitants were male, with the few women that ventured to Cancún coming with their husbands, engineers and construction workers. This sets the groundwork for the male dominated ‘machismo’ culture that is characteristic of modern Cancún (Cacho: 2005).

According to data from the 1990 Census, only 21% of the inhabitants of the municipality were born in Quintana Roo, while 74% came from other states, particularly the neighboring State of Yucatan, 51%, and 12% from Mexico City. With the influx of



workers and developers came rapid expansion without attention to community structures and institutions. Elena Azaola wrote in a UNICEF-DIF report (Azaola: 2001):

The inhabitants mention that hardly had an area been cleared when beer shops, that were often the first solid constructions in the region, sprang up. This has continued to happen since, to date, there are many more places that sell alcoholic drinks (perhaps some 2 thousand) than schools, health centers, or sports and recreational establishments for children and young people. In reality the town has only recently, for example, built two higher education schools and another two offering technical studies, there are also only two small libraries, that are badly conditioned and with few books, and that do not have the resources or modern technology necessary to make culture accessible to the young people. It goes without saying that there are no other alternatives for culture, art and recreation in the locality.

During the period 1990-1995 the annual average rate of growth in the municipality of Benito Juárez was 10.6%, the highest in the whole country where the average was 2.04%. This is largely due to the surprising growth in the hotel industry and tourism in general. Almost three-quarters of the population employed in the municipality, 74% work in the tertiary sector, while only 17% are employed in the secondary sector. Most of this population works in building and in different posts in hotels. Eight percent of the population in employment earns less than the minimum wage, while 45% earn between 1 and 3 times the minimum wages. Quintana Roo is seventh in the country in terms of Gross Domestic Product per capita (Azaola: 2001).

The districts are called *super-blocks* and take their names from numerical language with the *one hundreds* consisting of 101, 102, 103, followed by *two hundreds*

and so on up to the present *five hundreds*. Azaola suggests that the use of numerical names could possibly be “related to the difficulty of the inhabitants of Cancún to find an identity they can be recognized by, an identity that is different from the one of providing services and welcoming tourists, that is, the identity that is anchored in a purely economic profile” (2001, 35). Regardless of the validity of that statement, one can easily observe that the town was not built around public spaces or land marks that usually signify to its inhabitants a sense of identity: the parade ground, the main square, the cathedral or government offices, spaces that provide distinctive symbols for a community.

The hotel zone in downtown Cancún offers a clear contrast to the worker neighborhoods that surround it, with its many grandiose buildings and urban infrastructure providing all kinds of services. This different world clearly exercises a strong power of attraction for the local youth who, in one way or another, long to form part of it. Azaola writes, “the tourists, the type of life they lead in Cancún and their entertainment constitute the model to be followed by young local people who perhaps lack other points of reference” (2001, 26). Youth often resent the preferential treatment the local authorities give to tourists and feel discriminated against in their own country. Foreign tourists are given all kinds of concessions and exemptions from “the police rules prohibiting the consumption of drugs and alcohol in the streets, the presence of minors in night clubs and offences against morality, all of which happen frequently particularly among the more than 100,000 spring breakers who arrive each year and spend an enormous amount of money which is considered more important than

applying the rules” (Azaola, 36). However, while the style of living of the young tourists generally lasts only as long as their vacations, for the youth of Cancún, it contrastingly “constitutes the obligatory point of reference that they have within their reach, as they live in a locality that has gone out of its way to satisfy tourism” (Azaola, 36).

There is also a generation gap between the lifestyles of youth in Cancún aspire to have and the lifestyles of their parents. Some of them are students who live with their families and go to these places in a covert way while their parents are out at work, either because they have problems with addiction or because it gives them access to a certain way of living and consumption that their parents cannot give them.

### **Children in the Sex Industry**

Bars and nightclubs of all types where people go to drink, dance, see a show or ask for girls are an intrinsic part of the way of life in Cancún. Although the figures vary from one source to another, Azaola reports that “there are between 200 and 300 sex trade establishments in the locality, they also exist in all the tourist points of the region, especially in Playa del Carmen, Isla Mujeres and Cozumel, as well as in the tourist corridor that runs from Cancún to Playa del Carmen” (2001, 37). Figures from those who are responsible for health control in Cancún indicate that for each one thousand prostitutes, 300 are under age. However, this might be a conservative estimate given that it is taken from those who have applied for a health card. Protocol in health establishments in the past in Cancún was to ask for official documents certifying age from children working in the clubs or the sex industry, but they have stopped doing so

because this was proven to be no deterrent and was only depriving the children of needed medical attention. Currently health cards are only denied to very young girls.

In addition, there are adolescent boys who work in the milieu, either as transvestites in shows or as prostitutes for homosexuals. It is thought that for “every 10 establishments where girls work, it is calculated that there is one for boys” (UNICEF-DIF, 37). Unlike their female counterparts, boys who work in the milieu usually are migrants from other states because they prefer to avoid reproaches from their families and their communities. Young male waiters and entertainers offer sexual favors to older female tourists or students who come during the spring break season.

UNICEF-DIF (2001:46) reports that at least 700 children are being exploited in the locality that is Cancún. The categories are prostitution, sex tourism, trafficking and pornography. Included in this calculation are boys and girls up to the age of 18 despite the fact that the Penal Code of Quintana Roo establishes 16 as the age of majority for criminal effects because Mexico became a signatory of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. Prostitution is not designated as a crime for those over 18 (16 in Quintana Roo), but the Federal Penal Code does prohibit exploitation with the objective of profiting from the sexual work of others, regardless of whether they are under or over 18 years of age. Under article 201 of the Federal Penal Code “the procurement, facilitation, and force of a child under 18 years of age to perform acts of pornography, prostitution, consumption of narcotics, an/or commit criminal deed is a criminal offense punishable by a prison term at least 5 years in length (Ives, 2001). As for state laws, few states define child pornography as a crime but the ‘crime of corruption’ mentioned above can be employed to punish these actions. Article 208 of the Federal Penal Code

states that a “person who promotes, conceals, or permits the carnal intercourse of a child under the age of 18 will be sentenced to 8 to 12 years in prison. Recently incorporated into the Federal Penal Code is Article 201 bisection 3 which makes a criminal offense “any person who promotes, advertises, invites, facilitates, or negotiates, by any means, the movement of a person(s) inside or outside national territory with the purpose of having sexual relations with children under 18 years of age” (Ives, 2001). This addition to the code was integrated to combat sex tourism, like that which takes place in Cancún.

Sex tourism is defined as “the act of traveling to another country to engage in commercial sex, usually due to greater tolerance (or legality) in the destination country” (Shirk and Webber: 2004). Recently there have been increasing crackdowns on sex tourism in Asia, therefore, “many North Americans are now turning to Mexico and Central America for the sexual abuse of children,” says the director of the Latin American Programs of Casa Alianza (Shirk and Webber: 2004). The US State Department reports that “sex tourism, including child sex tourism, appears to be growing, especially in tourist areas such as Acapulco and Cancún, and border towns like Tijuana; foreign pedophiles arrive most often from Western Europe and the United States” (Trafficking in Persons Report: 2007). In February 2003, multimillionaire Thomas Frank White, age 67, was arrested in Thailand for the sexual exploitation of minors, including child prostitution and child sexual abuse in an orphanage he co-founded in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico.

Figure 2.1

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Factors Contributing To the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth	
Domain	Contributing Factors
Macro/Contextual (External)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- socio-economic               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- societal attitudes toward children and youth</li> <li>- social anomie among children and youth, i.e., a lack of connectedness on the part of youth with the larger society and their place within it</li> <li>- poverty</li> <li>- child victims of crime and violence</li> <li>- societal responses to crimes committed against children, including sexual crimes</li> <li>- The presence of pre-existing adult prostitution "markets"</li> <li>- the presence of groups advocating child-adult sexual relationships</li> <li>- sexual behavior of unattached and transient males including the military, seasonal workers, truckers, motor cycle gangs, conventioners</li> <li>- community knowledge and attitudes concerning HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Micro/Situational (external)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Socio-Behavioral               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family dysfunction</li> <li>- Parental drug dependency</li> <li>- History of physical and/or sexual assault</li> <li>- Personal drug dependency</li> <li>- School other social performance failures</li> <li>- Gang Membership</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Active recruitment into prostitution by others               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Peers</li> <li>- Parents or other family members (including siblings)</li> <li>- Local pimps</li> <li>- National and or international crime organizations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Individual/ (internal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Psychogenic</li> <li>- Poor self esteem               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chronic depression</li> <li>- External locus of control</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Seriously restricted future orientation</li> </ul>

Estes, Richard J and Neil Alan Weiner. *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children In the U.S., Canada and Mexico*. Executive Summary. University of Pennsylvania: Center for the Study of Youth Policy. September 19, 2001 (Revised 2/20/02). (pg 6)

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Elena Azaola, published in 2004 that some 17,000 minors in Mexico are victims of the sex trade. Azaola's research included visits to the establishments where these children and teenagers are forced to engage in prostitution and interviews with some of those who have managed to escape (Shirk and Webber: 2004). Figure 2.2 lists the leading factors contributing to commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

In 1995, the Mexican Attorney General's Office broke up a crime ring devoted to publishing and selling child pornography. A year later, a special investigative force was created, which has since uncovered at least one child pornography or prostitution network every year (Shirk and Webber: 2004). Of the cases of child pornography in Cancún, most have been brought against foreigners who abused children from the locality. Azaola notes "one of these cases was of an Italian who met up with several children in a petrol station and took them to a place in Puerto Juárez where he abused them and took photographs of them." (Azaola: 2000). Until recently, law enforcement viewed child pornography as non-commercial; filmed, photographed or audio-taped produced by individuals for personal use or swapped amongst a group of pedophiles (Hartman et al., 1984). However, due to globalization and innovations in communication technologies like webcams, child pornography can be recorded and stored and distributed more easily.

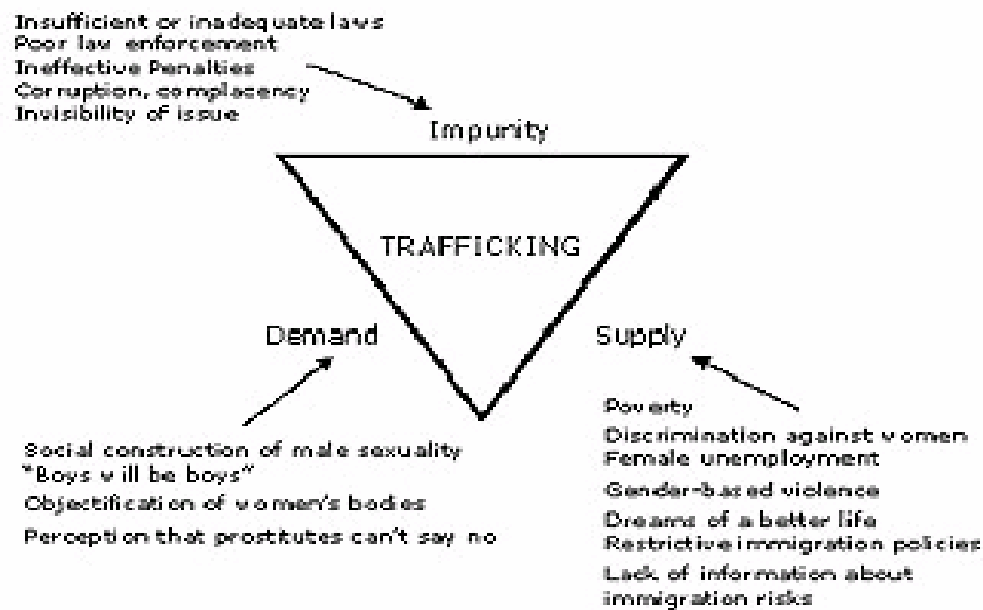
In reality there is no real measurement of size of the child pornography industry. O'Connell Davidson (2005) writes that it is sometimes parasitic of the adult sex industry, but often times independent due to its illegality and cultural/moral disapproval.

Working independently, networks of pedophiles 'share' victims and the pornography they produce amongst themselves.

In addition, research has uncovered the recruitment of children as sex workers by organized crime networks. According to the US State Department's 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report, Mexico is a source, transit, and destination country for persons trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. The majority of victims trafficked into the country come from Central America, destined for Mexico or the United States. The sale of children for sexual purposes can include girls who are given in marriage to older adults who give benefits to the family in exchange or children sold by their parents through a middleman who then sells them to an American family. Nicole Ives (2001) reports that young girls are trafficked across the northern border and forced to have sex with migrant workers. Figure 2.1 shows the different factors that lead to the demand, supply and impunity of human trafficking. Factors on the supply side of human trafficking are poverty, discrimination against women and gender based violence. On the border with Guatemala, "children, mostly girls, are 'bought' by club owners from procurers who find them in their villages within the state or across the border and bring them along under duress or under false pretenses with phony promises of work." Once trafficked, the girls must work to pay off what the club owner paid for them, plus food and lodging; the system of perpetual debt forces them to stay in servitude.



Figure 2.2: Human Trafficking Demand, Supply and Impunity Triangle



Source: <http://www.oas.org/cim/English/Proj.Traf.AlisonPaper.htm>

In 2002, the Fox administration carried out a major publicity campaign against the sexual abuse of minors, with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The campaign briefly moved the issue to the top of the national agenda, but with the passage of time, it has gradually slipped out of the spotlight once again. Cacho insists that the trial she is facing represents "a clear message to those of us who dare to speak out and expose the organized crime that is behind child pornography" (2005:13). Her arrest further verifies the danger experienced by journalists and child advocates in Mexico.

## CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDY- LYDIA CACHO RIBEIRO

**The Arrest**

On the night of December 16, 2005, Lydia Cacho Ribeiro was arrested outside the Centro Integral de Atencion a las Mujeres (CIAM), the women's shelter she directs in Cancún, Mexico. Several Puebla state judicial officers approached in an unmarked car and heavy-handedly detained her. "They came towards me and they said 'Lydia Cacho, you're arrested,'" Cacho told ABC new reporters. "One of them just took a gun and put it to my head and said 'Shut up.'" (ABC News, 6/21/06: 1). Cacho claimed that she never received any subpoenas (*Reporters Sans Frontieres*, Dec. 22, 2005: 1). The federal agents assigned to protect Cacho allowed Puebla police to arrest her, despite Cacho begging them to follow her. She was then transported 20 hours by car from the state of Quintana Roo to Puebla, during which time she was not allowed to contact her lawyer or take medication she needed to control her bronchitis (International PEN, March 8, 2006: 2). She told Heather Gehlert of AlterNet via telephone the following (2007):

I thought they were going to kill me. I was sure they were abducting me illegally even though they are policemen. I've been a journalist for 20 years and I was born in Mexico 44 years ago, so we tend to not trust police just because we have enough evidence of a lot of police selling their services to private persons to just kill people or abduct people or things like that. So I thought they were doing that. They did not give me enough information- everything was very irregular. The way they arrested me was a big group of policemen with guns- I mean, they really arrested me like I was a drug dealer. So, I thought they were going to kill me- they kept

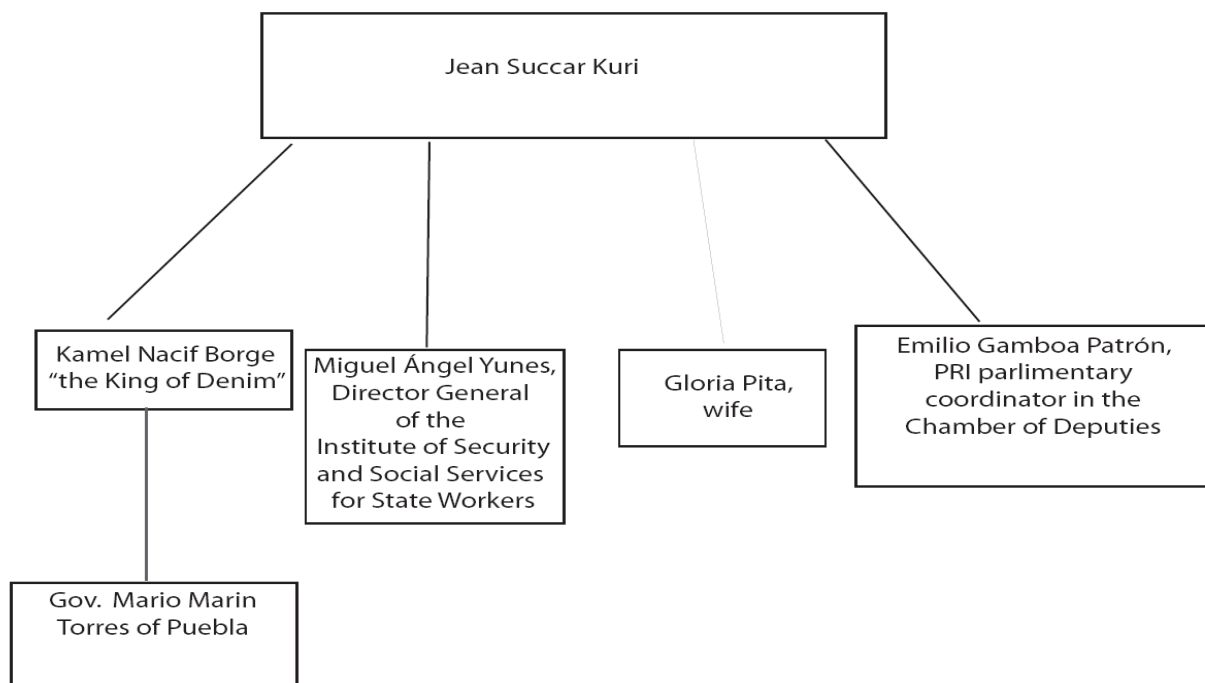
telling me so. They told me they were going to drop me in the middle of the ocean, and they kept asking me if I knew how to swim. They said they were going to rape me and all sorts of things during 20 hours. Every minute was like the hardest minute.

Once at San Miguel state prison, she was detained for 30 hours (Frontline, 01/2006/24: 2). Because of the protection of a female jail guard, Cacho was taken to the jail infirmary and escaped plans to rape her. There she waited until the judge called on her and posted the \$10,000 bail (Gerhlet, 2007: 1). Judge Rosa Celia Pérez González of Puebla's Fifth Penal Court released Cacho from San Miguel State Prison the following day on bail of 108,000 pesos pending a further ruling on 23 December. On that date, Judge Pérez ordered that Cacho be detained awaiting trial. However, she remained free since she had already posted bail and lodged an appeal against the decision (International PEN, March 8, 2006: 1).

The arrest was in response to a libel suit and preliminary investigation filed with the *Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado* (Puebla Public Prosecutor's Office), against Cacho by Jose Kamel Nacif Borge, nicknamed the "Kind of Denim", a Mexican businessman (Amnesty International, 19 December, 2005: 1). Nacif accused Cacho of libeling him in her book, *Los Demonios del Eden*, by linking him to Jean Succar Kuri, a Cancún businessman who had been accused of pedophilia and running a prostitution ring (Walker, San Diego Union-Tribune, 2006: 2). *Los Demonios del Edén* contains the personal accounts of minors who talk about the sexual abuse they suffered at the hands of the Cancún ring in which prominent figures were allegedly involved. In Cacho's book, Succar's victims describe how he sexually abused them himself, set up a prostitution

ring to allow others to abuse them, and photographed them for his own pornographic uses and for the Internet.

Figure 3.1: Chart of Succar's Alleged Associates



### ***Los Demonios del Eden***

In her book *Los Demonios del Eden*, Lydia Cacho Ribeiro features the testimonies of the child victims of Jean Succar Kuri and his pedophilia ring. Here are summaries of the main testimonies in the book. It opens with the story of “Cintia” (the names have been changed to protect the victim’s identities):

‘Cintia’

Cintia met Succar when she was nine years old. She testified “I went to

his house and swam in his pool, I and other children. He was there with his wife. We came to play and afterwards we were driven home by his driver. I was always given a little money for me to buy candies, or whatever I wanted” (Cacho, 2005:19). The day that Emma brought Cintia to Succar’s hotel, Solymar, Succar brought her to his room in the hotel, unhooked her pants and touched her. Succar told Cintia that this is what all fathers do with their children and that she just did not know about it because she did not have a father. He told her that if she told her mother, he would kill her mother. She testified that Succar photographed her performing sexual acts. She continued to be abused by Succar until she was thirteen years old. During the interview Cacho notes that Cintia is nervous and very serious; signs of psychological distress (2005).

‘Emma’

Emma was the first victim to speak out against Succar. She revealed his abuse to her Morals teacher at school. Emma had been a victim of Succar’s since she was twelve years old. She was brought to Solymar by a friend, Samaria who was older than her. Samaria told her that ‘Tio Johnny’ would give her money to buy school clothes. There were many other children from Emma’s school at Solymar, most of them older than she. She testified that at first Succar bought her beautiful things and she liked that especially because she did not have a father and her mother was an alcoholic.

The first time Succar abused her, he said “Close your eyes, we are going to play” (Cacho, 2005: 39). After the abuse, she cried and bled a lot. After that, when Succar

would touch her, she said her body was paralyzed. After oral sex with Succar, Emma testified that she ran into the bathroom where she vomited and cried. Succar filmed Emma naked and performing sexual acts with others. All of the photographs were stored on a black computer that Emma reported seeing often in Succar's bedroom.

Emma recalled a trip with Succar to Mexico City. There she ate at an elegant restaurant with Emilio Gamboa Patron, the current PRI Parliamentary Coordinator in the Chamber of Deputies and Miguel Angel Yunes, the Director General of the Institute of Security and Social Services for State Workers. At this time Yunes gave her one hundred dollars to buy a new dress. She said that Yunes' yacht, Fedayin was often in Cancún outside of Solymar. Once, Yunes brought to Solymar his lover and her eight year old daughter. After Succar tried to touch Sofia, the daughter, the girlfriend got angry at Succar. Yunes then kicked his girlfriend and her daughter out of the house. Emma said she believed that Yunes thought what Succar was doing was normal. He never asked her if she was a minor. Emma said she did not come forward until 2003 because Succar was such a rich and powerful man (Cacho, 2005: 40).

One of Succar protectors named in the book was Kamel Nacif Borge, one of Mexico's most successful businessmen and richest citizens and the owner of the Tarrant Apparel Group (TAG), headquartered in Los Angeles. TAG customers have included the Gap, Wal-Mart, Levi's, the Limited, Charming Shoppes, Tommy Hilfiger, Abercrombie & Fitch, The Wet Seal, and Federated Department Stores. Cacho writes that Succar and Nacif were good friends, going as far back as 1975 when they met in the airport in Mexico City. Succar was in the migration office, about to be deported because he lacked proper permission to work in Mexico, when coincidentally another

Lebanese- Mexican, Nacif, entered the office. Nacif then used his influence as an international businessman with many interactions with the Customs and Migration offices, to guarantee Succar citizenship (Cacho 2005: 30).

As a businessman Nacif had been very successful, though not without being criticized. It is alleged that he received “huge financial incentives from the Mexican government” and is known to have defaulted on his suppliers. Furthermore, he owes millions of dollars in taxes and has been accused of abusive labor practices and union-busting” (Tax, 2007: 1). After an international coalition of anti-sweatshop groups organized a campaign against TAG in October 2003, a number of these retailers withdrew their business. In response, Nacif closed down his Mexican factories in February, 2004, putting five thousand people out of work instead of making improvements. Kamel Nacif is also known as a Las Vegas high roller linked with mob figures, the illegal sale of narcotics and firearms as well as with money laundering (Tax, 2007: 1). Furthermore, Nacif was a large contributor to the Governor of Puebla, Mario Plutarco Marín Torres’ gubernatorial campaign (La Jornada interview with Cacho, December 29, 2005: 2).

Cacho documented instances in which Nacif witnessed illegal actions by Succar. He is also mentioned five times in Cacho’s book in testimonies of the victims, whom they indicate him as one of Succar’s friends, and as one of his powerful protectors. The book also mentions events in Nacif’s past, all of which are backed up by other journalistic sources, such as the involvement of Nacif in a money laundering scandal in Las Vegas, reports of sexual harassment in his assembly plants, labor accusations launched against his factory operations and benefits received from the Fobaproa

(*Fondo Bancario de Protección al Ahorro* or "Banking Fund for the Protection of Savings") (*La Jornada*, Dec. 29, 2005).

The book documents the involvement of other important PRI politicians such as Emilio Gamboa Patrón, a high ranking party member who has held eight prominent positions since 1972- currently serving as a Deputy from the state of Yucatán, and Executive Secretary for National Security, Miguel Ángel Yunes, in protecting Succar Kuri. "Emma" testified in front of the Attorney General of the State of Quintana Roo (PGR) that Alejandro Gongora Vera, Nacif and Yunes were involved in Succar's ring.

### **Succar Exposed**

Emma made her statement to the Attorney General's Office of Quintana Roo (PGJE) on October 23, 2003. She told them that she had had sexual relations with Succar and that in his house in Los Angeles he had pornographic material of sex between children and with children and himself. She said his wife was an expert with technology and had all of it on the computer. She also said that other members of the pedophile ring included Alejandro Gongora Vera, Kamel Nacif and Miguel Angel Yunes. At that time, she did not imagine that the ring was as large as it was. Four other victims denounced Succar on October, 24 (Cacho, 2005, 47).

Shortly after, Emma's teacher brought her to a lawyer named Acacio. Acacio then introduced Emma to her friend Leidy Campos Vera, the subdirector of preliminary investigation at the state prosecutor's office. Emma confided everything to Campos Vera, including giving her a video of a secretly taped conversation between Emma and Succar in which he admitted that sex with young girls was his weakness. Miguel Angel



Pech Cen, the sub-prosecutor for the northern zone, was appointed to the case along with Campos.

At this point the Federal Investigations Agencies (AFI) opened an investigation into the possibility that the case was linked to organized crime. Therefore, the case was expedited. Interestingly, Jean Succar Kuri, his wife and his son Jerry, fled to his house in Los Angeles, USA that same day. It was curious that even though Campos, Pech Cen and the state prosecutor's office had in their hands for fifteen days a taped confession from Succar during his conversation with Emma, they failed to issue a warrant for his arrest. Succar later testified that Pech Cen called Succar and told him what the plans were the day before Emma officially denounced Succar to the AFI. This is similar to the impunity that exists for actors involved in organized crime because of their connections and protectors in prosecutorial roles.

On October 31, 2003 Leidy Campos Vera and Miguel Angle Pech Cen conducted a large press conference in which they released the names of all the victims involved. Subsequently, the press and locals began to harass the children and mothers. Some victims even received threatening calls from Succar and his wife in Los Angeles. CIAM, Lydia Cacho Ribeiro's organization for battered women took them in. Women and child activists were outraged. They claimed that anyone working with domestic or sexual abuse cases know that it is of the utmost importance to protect the identities of the victims.

The case against Succar has not gone forward due to delays in the extradition process. The U.S. is very protective of its citizens and is distrustful of Mexico's investigative capabilities. However, it did not take long for Succar's powerful friends to

denounce him. All of his old friends claimed they were just mere acquaintances and did not know Succar well.

### **After the Arrest**

After the incident of her arrest, Cacho responded to the defamation and libel suit filed by Nacif and brought a complaint suit against Puebla governor Mario Plutarco Marín Torres and the state prosecutor's office that same week. She claimed her human rights had been violated (Reporters Sans Frontieres, Dec. 26, 2005: 2). On January 1, 2006, the State of Puebla dropped one count of criminal defamation against Cacho, but maintained the other. However, as of January 17, 2006, Cacho still faced a 4-year prison sentence for linking Nacif to child pornography ring under Mexico's then libel laws. Despite the dropping of one of the defamation suits, Cacho maintained that she would not get a fair trial in Puebla because of Nacif's close links with local authorities. She requested the trial be moved to Quintana Roo, her home state, or to be tried by a federal court. On January 20, 2006, the court granted Cacho's request and the trial was moved to Quintana Roo (Reporters Sanz Frontieres, Dec 26, 2005: 2).

On February 14, 2006 a telephone conversation between the governor of Puebla, Mario Plutarco Marín Torres, and businessman Kamel Nacif Borge, revealing a plot to arrests and scare Lydia Cacho, appeared in *La Jornada* (Petrich, February 14, 2006: 1). It was then reproduced on radio stations across Mexico. The tapes are thought to have been leaked by Nacif's now ex-wife (Cevallos, 9/5/2006: 2). In the first conversation, Marín refers to Cacho as a 'bitch' and says he had had her arrested and taught a lesson. Nacif asks Marín to pay a woman in jail to rape her. Marín says he gave the

order to have the activist thrown in a cell with "nutcases and dykes" so that she would be raped (Cevallos, 9/5/2006: 1). Nacif also thanks Marín by calling him "my precious governor" and says that he will send him "a beautiful bottle of cognac" (Roig-Franzia, April 1, 2007: 1). In the second conversation between Nacif and Succar, they discuss two underage girls with whom they plan to have sex (Cevallos, 9/5/2006). There are tapes of 12 conversations in all.

In another of the anonymously recorded conversations leaked to the press, Nacif can be heard talking with Succar. The two exchange information on "the girl from Miami," who they refer to as "putita" (little whore), and whom they claimed to have paid 2,000 dollars. Succar asks Nacif when it would be best to bring the girl to Cancún, and the latter responds that "next week, you son of a bitch, but you bring her to fornicate" (Cevallos, 9/13/2006: 2).

### **Media and International Organizations**

When Cacho's book, *Los Demonios del Eden*, was published in 2005, it was just a middling seller and received little press. Media attention came when law enforcement leaked a covertly filmed conversation in which Succar Kuri acknowledges to Emma, one of the girls who testified in Cacho's book, that fondling little girls is his 'vice' (Walker, April 4, 2006: 1). In the video Succar Kuri says, "It fascinates me to do this to her: to touch her, to caress her... That is all I do. It is my vice," he said. "Yes, it is a crime and yes, it is prohibited and yes, it is bad. I am not saying that I am decent and perfect. The thing is that I do not commit what we call abuse" (Walker, April 4, 2006: 2). Days after the video was release, a Cancún judge issued a warrant for Succar Kuri's arrest.

However, Succar had already left the country on a nonstop first-class flight to Los Angeles. Cacho told *the Washington Post* that the local authorities did nothing to ensure Succar was taken into custody and in fact tipped him off about the allegations (Roig-Franzia April 3, 2007: 2). Cacho also questioned whether journalists following the case took it seriously. She wrote that she overheard male journalists discussing whether or not a 12-year-old could enjoy sex.

The case gained national and international media attention in December of 2005, when Cacho was arrested. *The Washington Post* reported that as Cacho was being taken into custody she triggered her car alarm, a predetermined signal to alert trouble to her staff, who were watching her arrest on security camera from inside her shelter, CIAM (Roig-Franzia, April 1, 2007). From there emails and phone calls were sent to Cacho's sympathizers both nationally and internationally. Human rights groups including Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists of New York, the Commission of Human Rights, the World Organization Against Torture, and the Pan-American Company of Press were notified. Amnesty International had been following Cacho's case since 2004 when she reported receiving death threats from a former police officer of the *Policía Judicial del Estado*, State Judicial Police Force, in the state of Coahuila. He was under investigation by the federal authorities (*Agentes Federales de Investigación*) due to his alleged links with organized crime and at the time his wife and children were being sheltered by CIAM. Amnesty International released two separate Urgent Actions appeals to be sent in concern of Cacho's safety.

The impact of the national and international networks of human rights groups that Cacho's team contacted was felt the day of her arrest. In an interview with *Mother*

*Jones*, Cacho said (Scott, May 1, 2007: 1):

“The network worked really fast. I was arrested on the 16th at 12 o'clock. Probably two o'clock in the morning, the police stopped by a beach and told me I was going to jump in the ocean and die there, that they were going to rape me—and all these things, all these psychological forms of torture. But then they received a phone call. The caller told them to stop it and take me to Puebla. I didn't know [what had happened]; I'm telling you now, but I didn't know then, I just knew that the officer received a phone call in front of me and said, "Change of plans" and took me back to the car. It was months after that that we learned what happened. But [at the time] the governor of Puebla and others got calls from everyone you can imagine. An urgent action from Amnesty International arrived at the governor's office by fax and to the press and to the whole country”.

Cacho also claimed the support of almost all the news agencies within the country, hundreds of fellow journalists and friends, including a dozen national columnists. Two countries offered her political asylum and several PRI affiliated politicians renounced the actions of Governor Marín (Scott, May 1, 2007: 1). National support for Cacho was reaffirmed when prominent news dailies like *EL Universal* and *La Jornada* ran interviews with and articles written by Cacho, expressing her version of the events.

Internationally, Cacho's case was reported on by *the Washington Post*, *the San Diego Union-Tribune*, *The New York Times* and ABC News. *Reporters Sans Fronteras* chronicled online each new development in the section, “Press Freedom Day by Day.” The case is still under investigation by the newly established Special Prosecutor's Office for the Attention of Crimes against Journalists (FEADP). The new office is attached to the General Prosecutor's Office (PGR) and was established by President Felipe Calderon in response to country-wide violence against journalists. It is headed by lawyer and human rights advocate David Vega Vera, who, between February and

October, received 72 cases of harassment, intimidation and assault against journalists (International Press Institute, 2006: 1)

### Political Response

After the recorded tapes were released, politicians from the PAN and PRD took the opportunity to renounce Gov. Marín and *priista* politics. Though there has been increasingly more opposition party participation in government, the PRI still maintains a stronghold majority in Congress. This leads to a very divisive and partisan environment. Opposition party leaders took the opportunity afforded by Cacho's case to denounce practices of the PRI. *La Jornada* reported that Caesar Raúl Ojeda, of the PRD, said "sadly the recordings [of the conversations between Nacif and Marín] are not legal testimony in this country, by shame and by the deal that he permitted to be given to the journalist Lydia Cacho, the governor should renounce." Representative Jesus González Schmal, of Convergencia, accused Marín of ordering prosecutor Blanca Laura Villeda, the agent of the Public Department assigned to the case, Rose Breeze Espejel, and the judge Rose Cecilia Pérez González "of colluding to allow the revenge of this Mr. Kamel Nacif; this included the consent, the complicity and the direct responsibility of the governor" (translated from Becerril, Garduño and Mendez, Feb. 15, 2006: 2).

On Feb. 21, 2006, the Chamber of Deputies asked the Supreme Court to investigate Marín's role and determine whether Lydia Cacho's constitutional rights had been violated. In April, 2006, the PRD (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*) introduced a bill in the Chamber of Deputies Justice and Human Rights Commission that called for the decriminalization of libel, slander and defamation to a civil offense

without jail time. Additionally, it upheld the concept of professional secrecy for reporters by enabling them to keep the identity of their new sources confidential and not have to reveal them in court. The bill amended articles 350-363 of the Federal Penal Code.

Once the bill was sent to the Senate, it stalled for over a year and was finally passed on March 6, 2007 in a 100-0 vote with one abstention (IFEX, March 7, 2007). Felipe Calderon signed the legislation into law on April 12, 2007 (IFEX).

Though the amendment in the federal penal code was a positive step forward, it was more symbolic than concrete, given that most defamation and libel cases are tried at the state and district level. While waiting for Senate affirmation, the Mexico City Legislative Assembly adopted unanimously the “Law of Civil Responsibility for the Defense of Honor, Private Life, and Self-Image” (IFEX, May 1, 2006). This law has become effective in Mexico City, where defamation is now a civil offense rather than a crime. Mexico City took a progressive first step, however the new law still has to be approved by local congresses in the other 32 states (Tax, January 2, 2007: 2). Mexico’s legal system operates on separate state and federal levels, and federal laws do not supersede state laws, therefore, the fact that these restrictive laws still remain on the books in most Mexican states continue to prohibit journalists from working without fear of legal prosecution.

After the SCJN ruled that no serious violations of human rights were committed against Cacho by Marín or any of his accomplices, Louise Arbour of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights suggested that Cacho leave the country. Arbour also offered all the support of the UN to gain political asylum, legal advising and to respond to international courts (*El Universal*, February 16, 2008).

## Discussion

### Issues of Accountability

What does this case say about accountability in Mexico? Lydia Cacho's case brings to light elements of authoritarian legacies, corruption/collusion of high ranking officials, police lawlessness, and the dangers of being a human rights activist in Mexico.

This case suggests Governor Mario Marín Torres of Puebla did not hesitate to exercise his authoritarian powers. Wayne Cornelius (1999: 4) writes that subnational political regimes, like that in the state of Puebla lead by Governor Marín, were controlled by hard-line anti-democratic elements linked to the PRI remain important in the twentieth century but still retain power after 2000. After opposition parties have won seats in the federal, state and local legislators, as well as two presidencies, authoritarian enclaves still exist. Historically under the PRI apparatus, political actors at every level were intimately connected through clientelism, family ties, economic incentives, partisan loyalties and coercion (Cornelius, 1999: 10). Under the PRI apparatus, if an actor was found to be involved in corruption or excess use of authoritarian power, he would be controlled out of the fear of embarrassing PRI higher-ups and stifling his prospects of upward mobility in the party. Direct intervention by the president was real possibility which served to discipline potential 'troublemakers'. There was an ever-present credible threat that any breach of discipline would be severely and summarily punished (Cornelius, 1999: 11). Though there is some debate over whether or not top-down control mechanisms within the PRI were as strong and effective as scholars once thought, one cannot deny that this system, however strong, is currently breaking down.



This breakdown of presidential power accelerated during the Zedillo presidency (1994-2000), when he refused to get involved in low level political scandals. When then governor of Quintana Roo, Mario Villanueva, was deeply implicated in drug-smuggling operations, Zedillo refused to lend his support to an impeachment move in Congress. This was related as a de facto approval of Villanueva's highly authoritarian ways of controlling the legislature, the law enforcement and the media and granted impunity for Villanueva's drug offenses, at least until he was out of office in 1999 (Cornelius, 1999) .

Cornelius (1999: 13) argues that in the 1990s, the "subnational political arena will be the principle source of inertia and resistance to democratization, rather than the prime breeding ground for democratic advances (1999)." While popular movements and both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' forms of democratization (O'Donnell, 1992) can be expected to continue to work in Mexico, it is important to note that a countervailing influence will be operating at the subnational level so long as anti-democratic and authoritarian forces at the state and local levels can act with relative impunity. "In those subnational spaces where entrenched, hard-line PRlista leaders continue to hold sway, we can anticipate even greater impunity and more rigid authoritarian control, including freer recourse to official violence" (Cornelius, 1999: 7).

Governor Marín exemplifies a hard line PRlista whose authoritarian tendencies lead him to understand that he operates with impunity. In the taped interviews with Nacif, Marín did not appear hesitant to wield his political powers to come to the rescue of a friend, campaign financier and denim tycoon.

The close relationship between Marín and Nacif reveals collusion between state actors and business elites. The weakening of political control, like in Mexico, opens up

room for corruption and collusion between organized crime and state actors.

Considering this historical context, Stanley Pimentel (2000) examines how organized political and criminal elements come together in contemporary Mexico to allow collaboration with and control by, political authorities. Pimentel argues that three centuries of occupation, exploitation and civic neglect by Spain, followed by a century of dictatorships by revolutionary leaders, barred democratic civic society in Mexico from evolving overnight.

Pimentel (2000) expands Lupsha's two models of organized crime; the 'elite-exploitative' and the 'stage-evolutionary' models. The elite-exploitative model most accurately describes what has gone on in Mexico "where organized crime is a source of funding and illicit enrichment for the political elite and their social control agents" (Pimentel: 2000). Corruption is initiated by organized crime in pursuit of insurance and protection from prosecution by the state, which accept payoffs, but are rarely the initiators of connections. Social control agents, like the state, constantly threaten and tax traffickers and organized crime and in return these 'cash cows' are protected. Occasionally, state actors expose traffickers as 'sacrificial lambs,' in order to give the appearance of fighting crime. However, over time traffickers became more powerful and the incorporation of other political parties allows for organized crime to gain greater autonomy. What then takes place is organized crime that is autonomous from the state enough to challenge it both in military force and influence.

In the Cacho case, the relationship between the organized pedophilia ring and state does not fit nicely into one of these models. Instead, the collusion and reciprocal relationship between the business elite (Nacif) and political actors (Marín), allow for

organized crime to be protected and remain secretive because both parties are in need of the other. Nacif was a large financier of Mariín's gubernatorial campaign; in return Mariín granted Nacif the favor of intervening in the Cacho case.

Therefore, in Mexico today, traditional control of organized drug trafficking crime has broken down. Elites no longer exploit drug lords through forcing them to pay tribute to state agencies in exchange for state protection. However, other forms of organized crime, like Succar's pedophilia ring, appear to work within Pimentel's model, or at least illustrates the collusive feature of the relationship between organized crime and PRI politicians.

Furthermore, Cacho's case highlights the lack of accountability for lower level officials that operate on authoritarian commands. The willingness of the police to accept and carryout, extralegal methods of coercion and intimidation during Cacho's arrest supports Paul Chevigny's (2000) argument that torture is a common practice in many Latin American societies and in Mexico. Chevigny argues that "torture is used against those who are 'torturable.'" He classifies the 'torturable' as common criminals and rarely middle-class, except in desperate political cases or for corrupt purposes. Torture is used just as often as a form of punishment as it is a tool to extract information. Cacho is not lower class, but she is a woman and child activist, a role not esteemed in Mexican culture of *machismo*. It is for that reason as well as the unlikely threat of discipline from police supervisors, that Cacho was subjected to abuse during her journey from Cancún to Puebla. Police generally accept that torture and other means of coercion are legitimate tools for use in police activities.

The mismanagement of the pedophilia case against Succar further illustrates the

presence of impunity and uneven application of the rule of law that allows for accountability to break down. Guillermo Zepeda Lecuona writes that at both the Mexican federal and state level, “the public prosecutor is the authority responsible for initiating the investigation of crimes. This is largely due to the fact that most Mexican police lack practical or legal investigative capacity. Therefore, the public prosecutor has a ‘monopoly’ in the area of criminal action (Zepeda Lecuona: 2007). The public prosecutors’ offices are overwhelmed with casework. In 2000, local jurisdictions had to process an average of 552 cases plus backlog from the previous years (Zepeda Lecuona, 2007). Since this amount of case work does not lend itself to providing quality service, agencies often act as “de facto discretionary powers” that are unregulated (illegal) and rarely overseen thoroughly by supervisors, opening up opportunities for corruption and impunity. Due to the impossibility of investigating every complaint, much of the burden of prosecutions falls to the victim. For example, victims must bring facts and evidence directly to the agency if she desires the case to move forward (Zepeda Lecuona, 2007).

As observed in the case against Succar, the local prosecutor’s office was left to its own discretion in prosecuting. Despite having in their possession Succar’s taped conversion, they failed to issue an arrest warrant and to detain the suspect. Furthermore, evidence of corruption and mismanagement was abundant during the investigatory stage. The names of the victims were released to the public, despite norms of victim protection (Cacho 2005: 56). Lastly, Miguel Angle Pech Cen leaked to Succar the details of Emma’s testimony and the prospects of the AFI detaining him. This detail illustrates the intersection of collusion between state agencies and organized

crime as well as general mismanagement and impunity within the prosecutor's office.

Zepeda Lecuona (2007) urges that state attorney generals' offices cannot tolerate superficial or cosmetic reforms to the criminal justice system any longer, and instead require profound transformation. The public prosecutors' office was created out of the executive branch, during the decades of presidentialism, and like the executive branch of those times, the powers had insufficient checks and balances. The executive had converted public prosecutors' offices into another aspect of an "extensive network of control at the disposal of hegemonic political interests" (Zepeda Lecuona: 2007).

Zepeda Lecuona (2007) suggests a transformation would need to "guarantee autonomy of the office responsible for investigating crime and prosecuting presumed offenders, to isolate that office from political ambitions and vicissitudes, to endow it with autonomy and a career civil-service structure, and to establish a clear-cut system of regular supervision by independent organizations." Moreover, victims and prisoners must be able to rely on safeguards and have access to contribute and/or dispute the actions of their investigators. This requires the public and official prosecution of crimes, relieving victims of the high responsibility and costs of sponsoring and investigating the facts of the trial, as well as, the legality and good faith of investigators who adhere to mandated standards that support basic human rights and dignity of parties involved in the investigation (2007).

## **Significance**

From this case, what can be said about the role of non-governmental organizations in promoting social accountability? Peruzzotti and Smulovitz (2006)

present three main areas in which social accountability can be exercised: through the judiciary, through mobilization and through the media. Cacho's case encompasses all three of these aspects.

### Influence on the Judiciary

Lydia Cacho's case and the social accountability initiated in the judiciary has already had a strong positive effect on the Mexican culture of impunity and corruption. A federal law de-criminalizing journalistic defamation and libel has been passed, with it becoming local law in Mexico City.

Even though Cacho did not win her Supreme Court case against Marín, the existence of the Supreme Court case itself is a landmark. Her case is the first time that the Supreme Court has been willing to investigate a case of an individual regarding recent human rights violations, and a landmark for women's human rights. The other cases in which the Supreme Court has investigated state violence against citizens, invoked past uses of violence by the state (the massacres of students in 1968 and the assassinations of PAN politicians in the early nineties), both of which were found largely inconclusive and without resolution (Tax, January 2, 3007: 1). Cacho is also the first woman to file a federal law suit against a Governor, a prosecutor and a judge.

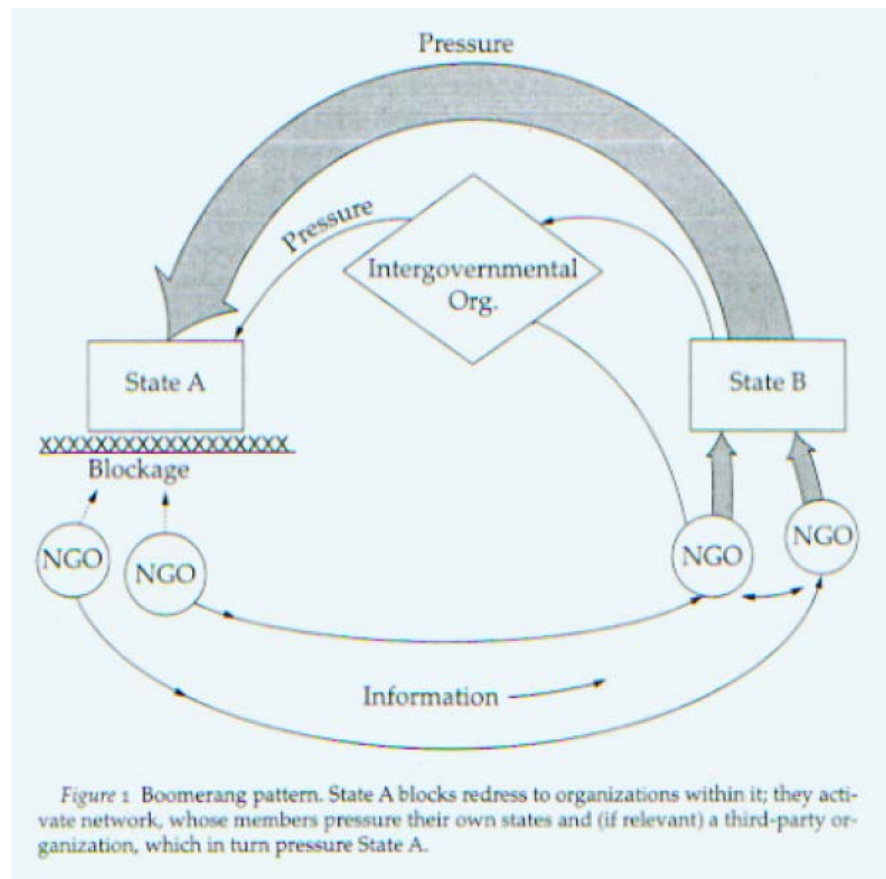
### NGOs as Agenda Setting Agents

The social mobilization element of social accountability can also be observed in Cacho's case. Social mobilization consists of the establishment of permanent civic organizations that can then bring about legal claims or reputation costs to the

wrongdoers. Cacho's case differs slightly from typical models of social mobilization in Latin America like Alianza Civica in Mexico, Viva Rio in Brazil and CORREPI (Coordinadora contra la Represion Policial e Institucional) which are domestic organizations that place topics on the public agenda and become credible and authoritative advocates on those issues (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006). In Cacho's case the permanent agenda setters and authoritative advocates were international organizations like Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters Sans Fronteras, the Commission for Human Rights and the Society of Inter American Press (Cacho, 2005: 12).

As demonstrated in Cacho's case, international human right networks play an increasingly strong role as social watchdogs and mobilizers for social accountability. Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) claim international advocacy groups strategically link activities in which members of a diffused principle network develop an explicit, visible role in pursuit of a common goal and through organizing information and membership to show sophisticated awareness of human rights issue. When domestic outlets of agenda setting and exposure are blocked or limited, international organizations can help bring attention and amplification for claims of wrongdoing. The authors propose the boomerang pattern as an alternative pattern established by international advocacy groups to combat state violators in the void that presents itself because domestic human rights actors were blocked. In the model, "State A blocks redress to organizations within it; they activate network, whose members pressure their own states and (if relevant) a third-party organization, which in turn pressures State A (Keck and Sikkink: 1998).

Figure 3.1



In Cacho's case, within hours her colleagues at CIAM-Cancún had contacted Amnesty International and others in the network (Cacho, Dec. 29, 2005: 1). The next day Amnesty International sent a letter of concern to Mario Marín Torres as well as the governor of Quintana Roo. Cacho testified that during her detention, one of the officers received a call, then subsequently told the other officers that they must take Cacho directly to Puebla. Cacho claims that this was in direct response to concerns expressed by Amnesty International (Cacho, 2005: 12).

Social mobilization as an element of social accountability can be found in the form of domestic civic groups or international human rights networks. Both work to speak as authorities on issues as well as set agendas for legal sanctions.



What mechanisms of social accountability were invoked in Cacho's case? International and domestic human rights and media organizations played a strong role in exposing and agenda setting in this case.

### The Media's Role in Increasing Visibility

The final strategy of social accountability is mediatization (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz: 2006). Social accountability requires visibility and media operations impose reputation costs on public agents who work to preserve their images in order to be reelected. Mediatization can be activated by individual journalists, media organizations or citizen groups.

Since media operations were privatized in the 1990s, state control of the media has lessened and civic journalism is on the rise (Hughes, 2006). The media is playing a much stronger role as agenda setter and as a watchdog. To illustrate a general example of this trend toward freedom in the media, let's examine Figure 3.2 illustrates when newspapers were considered to have set the agenda across a variety of topics in Mexican news. Newspapers were most assertive when writing about opposition parties (52%) while strikingly less with drug traffickers (11%), the church (14%), and the military (17%) (Hughes: 2006).

However, in Cacho's case, the media was on the forefront of agenda setting and reporting. All of the major newspapers, including international ones like the Washington Post and the ABC, covered the case. This suggests that criticisms of PRI officials can possibly be more aggressive in media agenda setting currently or in the future that it was in 2000 (figure 3.2). The advancement of journalistic rights through the

decriminalization of libel laws will most likely contribute to the increase role of the media in social accountability as a watchdog agent.

Figure 3.2

**Table 5.2 Press Agenda Setting**

News Target	Outside Actor (%)	Newspaper (%)
Drug traffickers	89	11
Church	86	14
Military	83	17
Opposition party	73	24
Business elites	73	27
PRI	65	29
President	58	35
Opposition governments	48	52
Average	72	27
n= 132		

Sources: Data taken from *Reforma*, *La Jornada*, and *El Universal*

Sources: Hughes: 2006. pg. 93

However, Reporters Sans Frontieres, ranks Mexico the second most dangerous place to be a journalist in the world, only to Iraq (Press Freedom Round-up: 2006) Amnesty International reports that during 2007, ten journalists were murdered and many others received threats (Amnesty International: 2007). Those that investigate organized crime networks are especially at risk and investigations by a Special Federal Prosecutor of Crimes Against Journalists failed to result in prosecutions of any of those responsible.

Nacif, Marín, Gamboa Patron, Succar and Angel Yunes all were recipients of reputation attacks as a result of media exposure. Social mobilizations against the Marín took place for many weeks in the capital of Puebla after the taped conversations were released. In addition, large crowds do gather at every speaking event Cacho engages in, even as recently as February, 2008 (Mexico Reporter, February 8, 2008: 1). Cacho

also continues to speak at rallies concerning other women's human rights issues like the femicides in Ciudad Juarez.

However, the implications of this exposure will not be fully understood until government officials try an attempt another electoral run for state office. Unfortunately, in Mexico public memory for wrongdoings committed by political actors is very short. In the short run, politicians affected by reputation costs could lose votes in the next election but it would not be uncommon for the very same actor that is scandalized now, reappears in a different political position, years later. This is common practice within the PRI.

As for the businessmen Nacif, reputation costs are not as clear. In response to labor allegations against his Tarrant Apparel Group, Nacif closed his plants. Therefore, there is precedent for reputations attacks have affected him in the past.

Succar currently is serving out his sentence for pedophilia in a Cancún jail. However, similar to the public memory of crimes committed by state actors, in a few years after media attention has left this case, Succar's sentence maybe reduced and he be let out early. This is not uncommon with organized crime actors or wealthy members of Mexican society.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the very import role the media and domestic organizations played in agenda setting as well as society's involvement in social mobilization. Without this attention, most likely little would have been done to have Succar actually extradited from the U.S. or libel laws be changed in locations throughout Mexico.

## CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

Still present are serious limitations in Cacho's case as to the protection of the human rights of journalists and citizens. Because the federal congress is still weak, the press has to play a strong role as a social watchdog/investigator. In Cacho's case, the press continually interviewed people involved and reported about significant occurrences' in the case. Outside of recommending an investigation by the Supreme Court into whether or not Governor Marín had violated Cacho's human rights, the Congress was too weak, too entrenched in divisive politics, and not removed enough from the PRI domination to hold a hearing.

Not only did the press have to play such a central role in pushing results in Cacho's case in order to compensate for the failures of the federal Congress, but domestic and international organizations had to play a strong role in setting and pushing the agenda. As a result of pressure from human and civil rights groups like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Committee to Protect Journalists, International PEN and others, international attention and pressure was placed on President Calderon as well as members of Congress in order to embarrass them into acting in Cacho's favor.

Moreover, the old centers of power rooted in authoritarian PRI reign, are brought to light by Cacho's case. Impunity and corruption embedded in state and local politics perpetuates an attitude amongst political actors that the state functions for their own, and their powerful friends, purposes and personal use. The reciprocal relationship between Governor Marín Torres and Nacif illustrated the collusion between the

business community with links to organized crime (Succar) and the PRI. This illustrates the changed relationship the PRI has with organized crime compared to the traditional elite-exploitative model emphasized by Pimentel (2000). Under this understanding it is not surprising that local justice was invoked for retaliation. As Marín, Nacif and Succar's relationships show, those with money and power understand that the resources of the state exist for their own personal vendettas and gain. Local government agencies and branches are also entrenched in longstanding loyalties to the old centers of power (PRI) and therefore bar progress in editing harsh law regarding freedom of press. The delay in re-writing defamation laws at the local and state exemplifies these roadblocks.

Lydia Cacho Ribeiro's case represents the great potential social accountability has for controlling governmental actions in representative democracies in general and especially in situations like that in Latin America, where citizens' ability to control government action is questionable. There are many roads that lead to accountability and social accountability offers some that are different than traditionally recognized in democratic theory. The specific methods used to impose controls and how they are sustained are left open by this research and require more empirical resources and debate. However, this study and the framework given by Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, reveal that in order for "democracies to achieve politically and legally accountable governments, the relationship between institutional mechanisms and specific social actions and actors should not be overlooked (2006). Social accountability offers alternative tools for imposing costs on political actors and is a necessary condition for the operation of those institution having mandatory sanctioning mechanisms as well as remind political actors that they can be held accountable.

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